

# ACCOUNTABILITY FAQ (UPDATED 3/8/04)

## ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES (AMOs) & ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT GOALS (AIGs)

**Question 1: What is the difference between AMO goals and AIG goals?**

**Answer:** Annual Measurable Objectives are yearly targets that will be used to compare student proficiency at the school building, district, and state levels for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decisions to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability provisions. Annual Improvement Goals (AIG) are yearly targets that school districts must establish to fulfill Iowa Chapter 12 regulations.

**Question 2: Are biennium averages weighted averages?**

**Answer:** Yes. For Iowa's accountability plan, biennium averages will be two-year weighted averages, with the target year being the second year of the biennium. For example, 2001-2002 results will be combined with the 2002-2003 results to compare with the 2002-2003 target. They are weighted by the number of students assessed in a given year.

**Question 3: How are biennium averages computed?**

**Answer:** For the web-based entry format on the Iowa Department of Education's (DE) web site, local education agencies (LEAs) will need to enter the percent of proficient students and the number of students assessed. The rest will be calculated for LEAs.

For those desiring to determine biennium averages, follow these steps:

First, multiply the percent of proficient students in the first year by the total number of students used to determine proficiency for the first year. This will give you the number of proficient students for year 1.

Second, multiply the percent of proficient students in the second year by the total number of students used to determine proficiency for the second year. This will give you the number of proficient students for year 2.

Third, add the number of proficient students for years 1 and 2, and add the total number of students used to determine proficiency in years 1 and 2.

Fourth, divide the total number of proficient students by the total number of students used to determine proficiency.

Multiply this result by 100, and it you will have the weighted biennium average percent proficient.

## INCLUSION IN ASSESSMENTS FOR AYP ACCOUNTABILITY (ALL STUDENTS)

**Question 4: Can students still be tested out-of-level?**

**Answer:** If a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) states that a student is to be tested out-of-level and below their grade level peers, the student may be tested at the appropriate level but may not be counted as proficient. Any student that is tested above their grade level peers may be counted as proficient if they score accordingly.

**Question 5: When reporting AYP this summer, must buildings and districts remove scores for students who did not meet the full academic year requirement during the 2002-2003 school year?**

**Answer:** No. Buildings and districts have the option to remove scores of students that were not enrolled for a full academic year, but it is not required. Due to the late acceptance of Iowa's Accountability Plan, many buildings and districts have already run

*achievement data that includes all students. However, it is important to note that a district must uniformly apply whatever decision it makes to all students.*

**Question 6: Are expelled students counted in the full academic year?**

*Answer: If the student is officially dropped from the building's enrollment rolls, the student is not enrolled for a full academic year.*

**Question 7: Can a student tested out-of-level be moved to the alternate assessment to be counted as proficient?**

*Answer: Only if the IEP team has determined that the student is unable to participate in the regular assessment with accommodations can a student be tested through an alternate assessment. At this time, no more than 1% of the total district student enrollment can be included in the alternate test proficiency scores for AYP determination.*

**Question 8: Should foreign exchange students be tested?**

*Answer: Yes.*

**Question 9: Should exchange students be counted in full academic year?**

*Answer: If the student was enrolled the previous school year on the first day of testing, and is enrolled on the first day of testing during the current school year, he/she meets the requirement for full academic year, and must be counted.*

**Question 10: Who is responsible for reporting the results of whole-grade shared students?**

*Answer: Because the decision was a joint decision to whole-grade share, the district that is providing the program for the students must test and report the scores of the students in attendance.*

**Question 11: How many days can a student miss school to not be considered for a full academic year?**

*Answer: If the student was enrolled on the first day of the testing period the previous year and is still enrolled on the first day of testing for the current year, full academic year applies. Only if the student was dropped from the enrollment rolls of the school or district is the student considered not enrolled for the full academic year.*

**Question 12: Are home-schooled students included in AYP?**

*Answer: No, home-schooled students are not included in NCLB accountability. Enrollment in a home-school assistance program or dual enrolled does not mean that they are included.*

**Question 13: How are students in accredited nonpublic schools included in AYP?**

*Answer: Nonpublic school students, even if they are shared time, are not included in AYP.*

**Question 14: How are English language learners (ELL) students who can't read English included in the district-wide assessment?**

*Answer: Until an alternate assessment is provided, every ELL student must be given the opportunity to "attempt" the NCLB accountability assessment in reading and mathematics. Thus, the test form must be provided to every ELL student who is enrolled on the date of testing. If the student is unable to complete test items, the school may count the student as participating but not proficient. ELL students may receive appropriate accommodations.*

## Trajectories/Confidence Bands

**Question 15: What does “proportion” of proficient mean?**

**Answer:** The word “proportion” is another word for “percent.” So, the question that confidence intervals addresses is, “To what extent is the percent of proficient students in a school different from the target percent of proficient students identified by the state’s trajectory?”

**Question 16: What happens to schools and districts that are achieving above the state trajectories?**

**Answer:** Districts that are achieving above the state trajectories (for all students) will have their own trajectories to meet to get all of their students to proficiency by 2013-2014. While federal Title I sanctions will not be applied, a district achieving above the state trajectory that does not meet its annual goal will need to file a corrective action plan with the Iowa DE. This complexity results from the combining of Chapter 12 requirements (which requires all schools to annually improve) with NCLB requirements.

**Question 17: What is a confidence interval?**

**Answer:** A confidence interval (or band) is used to determine if a school or district’s achievement scores are statistically different from the state’s scores. When a school’s or district’s scores do not make the AMO, a 98% confidence interval will be applied to determine if the school or district makes the AMO.

**Question 18: What does “proficient” mean?**

**Answer:** “Proficient” for purposes of the annual measurable objectives is defined as achieving the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile or higher on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) or the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) using national norms. The baseline year for proficiency levels is the 2000 empirical norming study. The behavioral descriptors that are used to describe students who are proficient in a content and grade level are available on the DE’s web site.

**Question 19: Can districts have their own trajectories for groups and subgroups?**

**Answer:** Student achievement for all schools, subgroups within schools, districts, subgroups within districts, and the state will be compared to the state’s targets and trajectories for the appropriate content areas and grade levels. Federal regulations do not allow for different subgroup trajectories.

**Question 20: Can school buildings have their own trajectories for grades and student subgroups?**

**Answer:** Student achievement for all schools, subgroups within schools, districts, subgroups within districts, and the state will be compared to the state’s targets and trajectories for the appropriate content areas and grade levels. Federal regulations do not allow for different subgroup trajectories.

**Question 21: Item deleted.**

**Question 22: Item deleted**

**Question 23: Will the confidence interval change from year to year?**

**Answer:** The width of the confidence interval is dependent on the number of students tested in a grade level group or subgroup in a school or district, as well as the target percent proficient. So as either one of these variables changes, so will the size of the

confidence interval. Generally, the more students, the narrower the confidence interval, the fewer the number of students, the wider the confidence interval.

## SAFE HARBOR

**Question 24: What does safe harbor mean?**

**Answer:** When a school or district has not achieved AMO and is still outside the confidence interval, safe harbor provisions will be applied. Safe harbor means that a school or district has reduced the percent of students in the low proficient level by 10%. If this has been achieved and the school or district has achieved the other academic indicators for graduation rate (high schools) or attendance rate (elementary and middle schools), the school or district makes AYP.

**Question 25: How do districts and schools determine if they meet safe harbor?**

**Answer:** In order for a school or a district to meet safe harbor, the school or district must reduce the percent of non-proficient students in an identified subgroup by ten percentage points or more, AND must meet or exceed the state's other academic indicator. The expectation for the other academic indicators (graduation rate for high school and attendance rate for elementary and middle school) is that a school will be either maintaining or making progress toward the state's target rates. The current graduation rate is 90%, the current average daily attendance rate is 95%. For example, let's say that a school (last year) had 100 students on free or reduced meals. Of those students, 40% were proficient, and 60% were not proficient. In order to make safe harbor, the school would need to reduce the percent of non-proficient students by 10 percent, or in this case, reduce the 60% by ten percentage points (or 6% decrease). This would effectively reduce the percent of non-proficient students, then from 60% to 54%. ALSO, the school would need to have maintained or made progress toward their other academic indicator. This other academic indicator also has a confidence band around it (for statistical similarity).

**Question 26: Will a school or school district have to compute its own safe harbor?**

**Answer:** A school or school district will not have to compute its own safe harbor.

## PARTICIPATION RATES

**Question 27: If a student has already tested in one district but moves to another district during the school year, does the new district have to test that student?**

**Answer:** If it can be verified that a student was already tested in one district prior to moving to another district during a school year, that student does not have to be tested again by the receiving district.

*If the previously tested student is not tested again by the receiving district, that student should not be included in the current district's participation rate calculation.*

**Question 28: If a school doesn't meet participation rate for ONE year, is it automatically a school in need of improvement?**

**Answer:** No. If a school or school district does not meet participation rate for the second consecutive year, it will be identified as in need of improvement, regardless of the level of achievement.

**Question 29: If students are suspended out of school during testing time, how are they counted?**

**Answer:** *The school district should make arrangements for the student to complete the district-wide assessments under school personnel supervision. Students suspended out of school during testing time must be counted in AYP data, regardless of the length of suspension.*

#### **DISTRICT AYP/IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT**

**Question 30:** **Is it possible to be a district in need of improvement and not have a building in need of improvement?**

**Answer:** *Yes. A building may not have the required number of students at a grade level or within a subgroup. However, when the achievement data are aggregated at the district level, the district might meet the required number and fall short of the AYP goal.*

**Question 31:** **What happens to a district when it is labeled in need of improvement?**

**Answer:** *If a district fails to meet the state AYP goal for two consecutive years, it shall be identified as a district in need of improvement. A district identified as in need of improvement develops or revises a plan of action. The plan shall incorporate scientifically based research strategies, identify actions that will improve achievement of students, address professional development needs, include goals and targets, and incorporate before and after school activities.*

*In addition, the State Education Agency must notify parents of each student enrolled in the district that the district has been identified as in need of improvement, the reasons for identification and notice of how parents can participate in upgrading the quality of the district.*

*The DE may apply additional sanctions to public school districts that are consistently identified as in need of improvement.*

**Question 32:** **What if the district is below the minimum number required for AYP accountability?**

**Answer:** *The No Child Left Behind Act requires that all public school districts meet AYP requirements. Therefore, the proficiency of the “all students” group will be examined using a confidence interval approach.*

**Question 33:** **What happens to a district that has been labeled in need of improvement when it reorganizes?**

**Answer:** *Since this would involve restructuring for all districts involved in the reorganization, the newly formed district would be judged upon its progress toward meeting the AYP targets. There would be no carryover designation as a district in need of improvement.*

**Question 34:** **What happens to a district that has been labeled in need of improvement when it starts a new whole-grade sharing agreement?**

**Answer:** *If the whole-grade sharing occurs at grade levels that caused the district to be identified as a district in need of improvement, the district would no longer be identified because of the restructuring involved. However, if the whole-grade sharing occurs at grade levels other than those that caused the district to be identified as in need of improvement, the designation continues.*

#### **SCHOOL/BUILDING AYP/IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT**

**Question 35:** **How are all schools regardless of grade configuration held accountable for AYP?**

**Answer:** If a school building houses any or all of the grade levels required to be tested under NCLB, the school building must test the students in the grade levels in the required content areas. If any school building houses none of the required grades, districts will be required to back map results from the school containing the required grade.

**Question 36: Is a school whose student number is below the minimum number required for AYP held accountable for student achievement?**

**Answer:** The No Child Left Behind Act requires that all public school districts meet AYP requirements. Therefore, the proficiency of the “all students” group will be examined using a confidence interval approach.

**Question 37: What happens if the school building boundaries change within the district?**

**Answer:** The school building data begins anew but must meet the state trajectory within two years. Full academic year still applies for the students at the district level.

**Question 38: How is building AYP accountability impacted if the district changes attendance center configuration?**

**Answer:** The building is considered reorganized and thus the data for AYP begins at year one. Full academic year still applies for the students at the district level.

#### OTHER ACADEMIC INDICATORS (GRADUATION RATE AND ATTENDANCE RATE)

**Question 39: What is the definition of graduation rate?**

**Answer:** Graduation rate is defined as the percentage of students, measured from the beginning of ninth grade, who graduate from high school or an alternative placement within the district with a regular diploma.

*The accountability plan also allows schools to include students who have had requirements modified in accordance with a disability when reporting graduation rate.*

**Question 40: What is the definition of attendance rate?**

**Answer:** Attendance rate is defined as the aggregate days of K-8 student attendance in a school district divided by the aggregate days of K-8 enrollment.

**Question 41: How is graduation rate reported?**

**Answer:** Graduation rate for districts and the state is calculated at the DE from data reported annually by public school districts on the Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS).

*The graduation rate used will always be one year in the arrears because some students complete graduation requirements during the summer.*

**Question 42: How is attendance rate reported?**

**Answer:** The K-8 attendance rate for districts is calculated at the Iowa Department of Education from data reported annually by public school districts on the nonfiscal portion of their Certified Annual Report (CAR).

**Question 43: If a student is suspended, is he/she counted as “attending” for the days of suspension out of school?**

**Answer:** Yes, students receiving an “in-school” or “out-of-school” suspension are to be counted as attending.

**Question 44: Are graduation rates and attendance rates biennium averages?**

**Answer:** *No, they are annual calculations.*

**Question 45: Is there a confidence band attached to graduation rates and attendance rates?**

**Answer:** *Yes, all public schools and districts must make progress towards or maintain (within the bounds of statistical similarity) the state average for graduation and attendance rates.*

**Question 46: What determines whether a student is considered a diploma recipient in the calculation of graduation rate?**

**Answer:** *A student is considered a diploma recipient if the student receives a regular diploma for completing all unmodified graduation requirements for the district's regular high school program, receives a regular diploma from an alternative placement within the district, or has had district graduation requirements modified in accordance with a disability and has received a regular diploma. Students who have finished the high school program, but did not earn a diploma but may have earned a certificate of attendance or other credential in lieu of a diploma, are not considered diploma recipients. Students who receive a GED are not considered diploma recipients.*

**Question 47: When students are absent for extended periods of time, how should they be counted in the attendance rate?**

**Answer:** *If a student moves or leaves the district for an extended period of time, and is not receiving any services from the district during the extended absence, the district has the option to drop him/her from the district roll and re-enroll them upon their return at a later date. This policy should be applied consistently across the district for all students.*

**Question 48: What does 1% of alternate assessment mean?**

**Answer:** *NCLB does NOT limit the percent of students able to take the alternate assessment. A student's participation in the alternate assessment is decided by the IEP team. Any student taking the alternate assessment is counted in the participation rate. However, you can only use a maximum of 1% of the proficient scores at the district level toward district AYP. There is no limit at the building level.*

**Question 49: What will the accountability system be for students with IEPs who are placed out of state?**

**Answer:** *If a student is placed out-of-state prior to the testing period for that LEA, the student will not count toward the participation rate. If a student is placed out-of-state after the testing period for that LEA, and that student was enrolled in the district at the beginning of the testing window the previous year, that student WILL be included in the participation and AMO determinations for the current school year, because they have met the full academic year criteria.*

**Question 50: Item deleted.**

**Question 51: Item deleted.**

**Question 52: Item deleted.**

**Question 53: How can a school building or district be labeled as in need of improvement?**

**Answer:** *If a school building or district does not meet one of the following for two consecutive years, it will be labeled as "in need of improvement":*

- *Achieve a 95% participation rate for all students enrolled (or for any subgroup) at the time of testing.*

- *Achieve the AMO for the grade level and content area, for any group or subgroup, or fall within the bounds of statistical similarity, or meet safe harbor requirements as specified in federal regulations.*
- *Maintain (within the bounds of statistical similarity) or make progress toward the state's target for graduation rate (high school), or average daily attendance (elementary and middle school).*

**Question 54: How soon can a school building or district be labeled as in need of improvement?**

**Answer:** *Schools are currently being identified as schools in need of improvement based on the 1994 federal legislation. AYP decisions will continue to be made on an annual basis for all schools, as per NCLB regulations.*

**Question 55: To which schools do NCLB sanctions apply?**

**Answer:** *NCLB sanctions apply to all schools receiving Title I funding. Identification of a public school as "in need of improvement" can occur without sanctions being applied (if the school does not receive Title I funding).*

**Question 56: Can a school keep its annual improvement goals under Chapter 12?**

**Answer:** *A school has the flexibility to keep its annual improvement goals under Chapter 12, and add AYP goals using the state targets, or to use the state targets for AYP as its annual improvement goals.*

**Question 57: What if a group achieves at 100% proficiency?**

**Answer:** *If a group achieves the 100% proficient level, the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 forbids releasing this information. As such, if this does occur, a school or school district should report the result as >99% (greater than 99% proficient).*

**Question 58: When school personnel enter the AYP data into the DE web collection system, will that data be entered as an aggregate number for subgroups or will personnel have to enter individual student data?**

**Answer:** *For the current collection of data, it will be an aggregate number.*

**Question 59: What will the state use as the AYP appeal process?**

**Answer:** *During the initial implementation of the accountability plan, if a school or district does not make AYP, the state will work with the school or district to validate their data, specifically in relation to participation, rates, full academic year, graduation rates or attendance rates, confidence intervals, and safe harbor. Schools or districts will also be allowed to provide additional evidence to support any claims that the decision that the school or district did not make AYP was made in error. Final decisions on AYP will rest with appropriate officials from the DE.*

**Question 60: What about science goals?**

**Answer:** *Science goals will continue to exist as a requirement for Chapter 12. As of January 1, 2004, the U.S. Department of Education has not identified any intentions to include the content area of Science as part of determining AYP.*

**Question 61: What is the role of the School Improvement Advisory Committee with regard to AMO goals?**

**Answer:** *The intent of Chapter 12 and the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan process has always been to examine school and district level data to drive the decision making that occurs on behalf of the students and the instructional process. One by-product of the AMO goals will be to focus on reading and mathematics. While schools and school districts will need to pay closer attention to both content areas, it is*



*recommended that schools and districts examine their data as they attend to additional learning priorities and needs of students.*

## REPORTING

**Question 62: Is the State Report Card in August reliant on the annual progress report (APR) data that schools will submit on August 15?**

**Answer:** *No. All data for the State Report Card required under NCLB will be gathered through the DE's web-based data system for AYP and through other means.*

**Question 63: What are the different "N" numbers for state reporting to the local community and federal accountability under NCLB?**

**Answer:** *State Reporting Requirement: 10 or more students in a grade level or subgroup: Report reading, mathematics, and science data in district APR*

*Federal AYP Accountability Purposes*

*30 or more students in a grade level or subgroup: Data will be used for AMO. 40 or more students in a grade level or subgroup: Data will be used for participation rate for AYP.*

## OTHER

**Question 64: What technical assistance will be provided to help schools with appropriate accommodations for students with IEPs?**

**Answer:** *School districts should use guidance provided by the Iowa Department of Education, Technical Assistance Guide District-Wide Assessment Decisions For Students with IEP, 504, or English Language Learner Services, available at the following URL:*

*<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/is/dwa/doc/tag03.doc>*

**Question 65: Can accommodations be provided for students other than ELL and students with disabilities?**

**Answer:** *Yes. Students with 504 plans may also take tests with accommodations, provided they are specified in the 504 plan. All other students (with the exception of English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students having 504 plans) should take tests without accommodation. On rare occasions, a student may have injury or circumstances that might require a reasonable accommodation—but that is a local decision.*

**Question 66: Item deleted**